



**IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program**  
**2015 Symposium Proceedings**

**New Research on**  
**Securing Educational**  
**Equity & Excellence for**  
**English Language Learners**  
**in Texas Secondary Schools**



**INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**  
MARÍA "CUCA" ROBLEDO MONTECEL, PH.D.  
PRESIDENT & CEO



“Dr. José A. Cárdenas dedicated his life to improving educational opportunities for all children, leading decades-long efforts to achieve school finance equity,”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel,  
IDRA President & CEO

## About the IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program

The José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program was established by IDRA to honor the memory of IDRA founder, Dr. José Ángel Cárdenas. The goal of the program is to engage the nation’s most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure equity and excellence for all public school students.

### Program Framework

Under the leadership of Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO, the José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program focuses on and funds school finance research that builds cross-disciplinary and inter-sector perspectives on equity. IDRA selects one or more fellows per year who will dedicate themselves to a period of intense study and writing in school finance. IDRA holds an annual symposium that includes release of the fellows program paper. The paper and findings are published in the symposium proceedings and disseminated to the education research and policymaker community.

IDRA named Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos to be our 2014 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow for the inaugural year of the program. An assistant professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos has published extensively in the area of K-12 education finance, policy and parent engagement and its impact on opportunity, equity and outcomes in low-income ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. His research synthesis is on Page 10 and his full paper is on Page 32.

### Program Background

Dr. Cárdenas was actively involved in the school finance reform efforts since the early days of the lower court’s *Rodríguez vs. San Antonio ISD* litigation when he was superintendent of the Edgewood ISD. Following the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court reversal of the *Rodríguez* decision that found the Texas system of school finance unconstitutional, he resigned from the Edgewood ISD to establish IDRA to advocate school finance reform and improved educational opportunities for all children. He led decades-long efforts to achieve school finance equity and was instrumental in the *Edgewood* court cases. His research, articles and books provided a blueprint for those interested in bringing about future reform in schools and other social institutions.

In the foreword of Dr. Cárdenas’ book, *Texas School Finance Reform: An IDRA Perspective*, Dr. James A. Kelly stated: “He worked hard, he played hard. And in doing so, never lost sight of his goal. Because for José school finance reform was never really an end in itself. It remained a means to a larger end: to improve teaching and learning for all children; in particular, to improve the life chances of the poor and dispossessed.”

**IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program 2015 Symposium Proceedings – New Research on Securing Educational Equity & Excellence for English Language Learners in Texas Secondary Schools**

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No ISBN. Distributed by the Intercultural Development Research Association. Manufactured in the United States.

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This symposium was convened on February 2, 2015, in San Antonio by the Intercultural Development Research Association and hosted with the Center for Mexican American Studies and Research, Our Lady of the Lake University.

## Symposium Resources



### Watch the symposium video on-demand

This event was streamed live by NowCastSA and is available online in four sections:

- Part 1: Symposium opening and research presentation (1:37:46)
- Part 2: Discussant panel with Q&A (1:29:53)
- Part 3: Roundtable discussions report-outs and closing (1:00:57)
- Part 4: Participant interviews (0:32:34)

<http://budurl.com/IDRAncJ15>

### See photos from the symposium

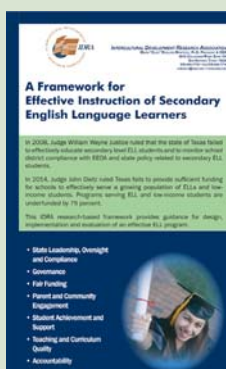
<http://budurl.com/IDRAflkrFeb15>

### See the symposium program (pdf)

<http://budurl.com/IDRAelIP15>

### Get info on the next Call for Fellows

[http://www.idra.org/Fellows\\_Program/](http://www.idra.org/Fellows_Program/)



### Download IDRA's Framework for Effective Instruction of Secondary English Language Learners

This IDRA research-based framework provides guidance for design, implementation and evaluation of an effective ELL program.

<http://budurl.com/IDRAfrSecELLS>

## Media Coverage

Some initial news coverage generated from the event include the following (links to news coverage is available on IDRA's symposium webpage:

[www.idra.org/IDRA\\_Events/Fellow\\_Program\\_Symposium/](http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Events/Fellow_Program_Symposium/)

- “Extra Help in Schools Where Needed,” an editorial by the San Antonio Express-News (“It is as if the state really doesn’t want them to succeed in school and then in life.”):  
<http://budurl.com/SAEN020315>
- “More Money for Bilingual Education Urged,” by Francisco Vara-Orta of the San Antonio Express-News:  
<http://budurl.com/SAEN020315>
- “Finding the Keys to School Funding in your Pocket,” by Julian Vasquez Heilig (one of the symposium panelists) on his Cloaking Inequity blog:  
<http://budurl.com/Cllneq020915>
- “Lessons from Texas on the Relationship Between School Funding and the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners,” by Amaya Garcia of the Education Policy Program at New America Foundation (see also Page 6):  
<http://budurl.com/EDcentral020915>



In person and via livecast, the event gathered more than 80 education and community leaders, and experts in law and education research around the critical question of how we can improve secondary education quality and access for English learners.

## Introduction

English language learners make up the fastest growing segment of the student population, but they are one of the lowest academically performing groups of students, and the achievement gap widens as students progress through school. Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, IDRA's inaugural José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow, presented his research findings on securing educational equity and excellence for English language learners in Texas secondary schools at a symposium in San Antonio on February 2, 2015.

In person and via livecast, the event gathered more than 80 education and community leaders, and experts in law and education research around the critical question of how we can improve secondary education quality and access for English learners. A panel of experts reflected on key themes and questions raised by the research and participants explored important implications of the research for education quality and equity for English learners in policy and practice.

In 2014, Texas schools enrolled over 800,000 students identified as English language learners. The majority of ELL students are U.S. born, with fewer than 20 percent being recent immigrants.

While Texas only requires schools to provide ELL programs if they have at least 20 ELL students in a grade level, federal policy requires schools to serve every ELL student – as

was reiterated recently by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (see Page 38).

This study found almost no secondary schools in Texas that are consistently exceeding academic benchmarks with ELLs. The limited number of schools with highest ELL achievement (17 out of 6,570 schools) expend significantly more general funds (over \$1,000 more per student) than other schools. Texas is significantly underfunding ELL education (with supplemental funding of only 10 percent despite research indicating much higher weights are needed).

Though increasing ELL weighted funding is important, the funding weight alone is not sufficient without also increasing funding for the base program for all students. State reporting on the status of ELL education in Texas schools does not provide a clear picture since much of the data lumps elementary and secondary grade level information.

The day following the symposium, IDRA briefed legislative staff in Austin on the research and implications for policy in a forum hosted by Texas State Senator José Rodríguez and held in collaboration with the Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas at Austin. Sen. Rodríguez stated, “What we heard from the research is confirmation that Texas is not doing right by our English language learners. Texas needs to do better at investing in education.”



"We believe that equal access to a quality education is the civil rights issue of our generation, and we work in every way to make educational opportunity a reality."

– Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO

## **Message from Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO**

At IDRA we have an unshakable conviction: that all children are valuable. We believe that equal access to a quality education is the civil rights issue of our generation, and we work in every way to make educational opportunity a reality.

We know that our kids, of any color and speaking any language, with or without immigration papers, are valuable. Yet, English language learners, who number 4.7 million students in the United States and equal 10 percent of the student population nationally, continue to be placed in underfunded programs that do not produce results.

In Texas, ELLs number more than 800,000 students and constitute 17 percent of the student population. Yet, 62 percent of ELL fourth graders in Texas schools read below grade level. And the 200,000 middle school and high school ELLs in Texas are more than twice as likely to be retained in grade. They are also one of the lowest academically performing groups of students, and the achievement gap widens as students progress through school, with less than 10 percent being considered college-ready graduates. At the same time, the State of Texas fails to fairly fund and to monitor the effectiveness of services and programs for ELLs.

During our symposium, Dr. Oscar Jimenez Castellanos, the first José Angel Cárdenas School Finance Fellow, presented his research findings on securing educational equity and excellence for ELLs in Texas secondary schools. A panel of discussants then explored important implications of the research for education quality and equity in policy and practice. Roundtable leaders facilitated further discussion as we explored participants' recommendations and concerns, as well as the challenges, the risks of inaction, and the payoff of action in providing for a high quality education for ELLs.

We are grateful to the Center for Mexican American Studies and Research at Our Lady of the Lake University for hosting this symposium and to all those who participated, both in person and online.

I was impressed – but not surprised – with the breadth of the conversation and the depth of the knowledge that participants brought and with their willingness to share it. We are deeply thankful.



**Sister Jane Ann Slater, CDP, Ph.D.**, welcomed the symposium participants. Sister Jane Ann is the eighth president of Our Lady of the Lake University. She has twice been elected a superior general of the Congregation of Divine Providence, the congregation that founded and sponsors this university. She has been a teacher in elementary schools in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. She received a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry from the University of Colorado and served as faculty in chemistry at OLLU from 1970 to 1981. As she completes her term as president of OLLU this summer, she will take on a new challenge as the first woman chancellor for the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio.

As she spoke about the mission of Our Lady of the Lake University and the importance of educational opportunity for English language learners, she said: "We know that these students have a right to the quality of education that they deserve. They deserve it and they have the right to it."

**Laura Tobin Cárdenas** and José Angel Cárdenas, Ed.D., were married for 42 years. On the occasion of this inaugural IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow Symposium, she presented a \$1,000 scholarship to Our Lady of the Lake University for teacher preparation for English language learners in memory of Dr. Cárdenas, founder of IDRA. IDRA board member, Sally Andrade, Ph.D., of El Paso, joined her in the presentation.



# **“Lessons from Texas on the Relationship Between School Funding and the Academic Achievement of English Language Learners”**

**– News story by the New America Foundation, February 9, 2015**

The primary message: schools need to be better funded and funding weights for ELLs need to be increased to align with the actual costs of successful programs.

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**Amaya García,  
Policy Analyst,  
Education Policy Program at  
New America Foundation**

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*As part of our Dual Language Learners National Work Group, New America uses the term “dual language learners” (DLLs) to denote students who are learning English even as they continue to develop basic proficiency in their home language. These students are generally eight years old or younger. This post uses the term “English language learners” (ELLs) to refer to the broader category of students of any age who are learning English at school.*

Texas’ Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) held a research symposium titled “Securing Educational Equity and Excellence for English Language Learners”...

What can be done to improve outcomes for ELLs in Texas? To start, policies supporting the education of these students need updating. State Senator José Rodríguez, chair of the Senate Hispanic Caucus and member of the state Senate’s education committee, shared core components of the collaboratively developed Latino Policy Agenda for the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature. The primary message: schools need to be better funded and funding weights

for ELLs need to be increased to align with the actual costs of successful programs. Senator Rodríguez’s Senate Bill 161, which would increase the weight for ELLs from 0.10 to 0.25, would be a step forward in ensuring adequate funding for these students. (For more on how states allocate funding for ELLs, see this recent report from the Education Commission of the States: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/16/94/11694.pdf>)

Senator Rodríguez emphasized that the education of English language learners provided a challenge and opportunity for the state, “These children, who will make up our future labor force, will be either limited in English proficiency or will be proficient in two or more languages. We have the opportunity to choose and decide which one will serve us, and the state of Texas and the nation better.”

Additionally, the relationship between school funding and ELLs’ academic achievement needs more attention. The importance of adequate funding for ELLs was exemplified in Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos’ presentation. He began with a frank admission: “Before conducting the study I had a perception [...] that Texas was at the leading edge of educating English language learners [...] I was expecting to find real solutions to national issues related to secondary English language learners.” But, rather, the results of

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Note: This article originally appeared online (<http://www.edcentral.org/lessons-from-texas/>) and is reprinted with permission.



his study revealed that Texas was “not the utopia” he had envisioned.

For starters, only 20 secondary schools (2.6 percent of all Texas secondary schools) met academic benchmarks for ELLs, which were defined as 75 percent of ELLs passing or exceeding state benchmarks on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in the areas of ELA, math, science and social studies. And, only two secondary schools in the entire state sustained that benchmark level of academic performance for English language learners across three years!

Moreover, about 60 percent of secondary schools in the state had masked or missing data on ELL's TAKS performance in 10<sup>th</sup> grade – meaning that they had less than five ELLs tested and thus did not have to report on their performance. In other words, the majority of secondary schools in the state are not being held accountable for the performance of ELLs.

Jimenez-Castellanos divided schools into five groups in order to draw comparisons between the highest-performing and lowest-performing secondary schools for English language learners. Gaps between the highest and lowest performing schools showed up everywhere – from achievement to demographics to funding. For example, in 2012, 85 percent of ELLs in the highest-performing schools graduated – compared to only 60 percent of ELL students attending schools in the bottom quintile. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS passing rates in 2010 were 87 percent in the top quintile and only 10 percent in the bottom quintile. Moreover, the lowest performing schools were much larger on average (ranging from 1000 to 750 more students) than the top performing schools.

There were also differences in school expenditures between the bottom and top quintile schools. Here is a chart I've made (using Jimenez-Castellanos' data) to illustrate those relationships.

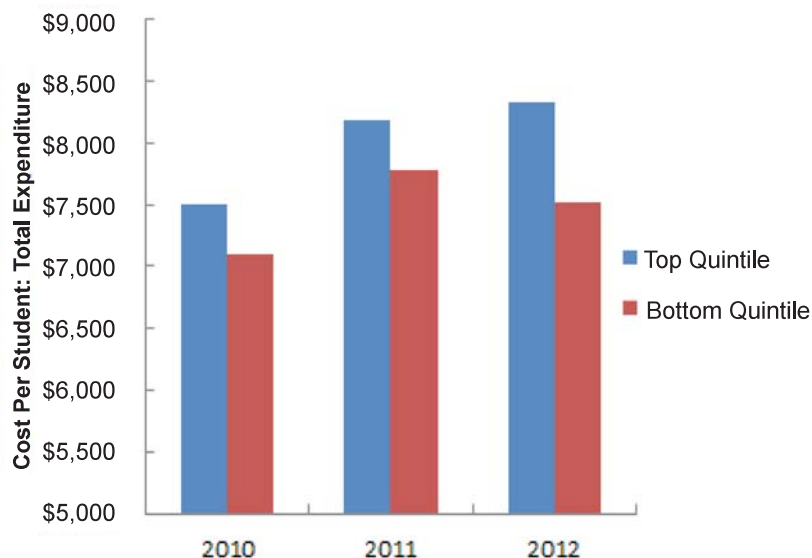
Notably, gaps in per-pupil funding increased between 2010 to 2012 (as did overall funding levels). The significance of these funding gaps was reiterated throughout the presentation: schools that spend more money serve ELLs better. Money matters!

In closing, Jimenez-Castellanos asserted that current funding mechanisms in Texas are inadequate “to support and sustain secondary [ELLs] meeting Texas' academic benchmarks” and recommended that the bilingual weight used to supplement ELLs be increased from 0.10 to 0.50. If this seems extreme, note that Maryland provides additional weighted funding equivalent to 0.99. Finally, he argued that the state should do more to increase ELLs' access to rigorous coursework, expand their participation in Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses, and implement research-based programs to support the learning of secondary English language learner students.

Obviously this research is only a starting point in understanding the relationship between resources and English language learners' academic achievement. Further research is warranted on how better-performing, better-funded schools use their resources to support the education of

their ELL students. Is it put towards hiring bilingual/ESL certified teachers? Providing meaningful professional development opportunities? Increasing support staff at the school? Student and parent engagement initiatives? Without those answers it is difficult to discern why and how money matters for English language learner students in particular.

*Note: This post is part of New America's Dual Language Learner National Work Group. Get more information on this team's work at: <http://www.edcentral.org/dllworkgrouplaunch/>.*



# Status of English Language Learner Education

## ELLs are the fastest-growing segment of the student population.

4.7 million students in the United States = 10% of the student population

The highest percentages of ELL students are in: Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas.

860,000 students in Texas = 17% of the student population

200,000 of those are in middle school and high school

## A diverse group of students with varying instructional needs

The ELL student population is composed of several subgroups...

**Long-term ELLs** have been classified as LEP for at least seven years and are typically found in grades 6-12. They make up 50% to 70% of secondary ELLs. They often are fluent conversationally, while their academic language needs go unnoticed or under served.

**Reclassified ELLs** have received language support services and are now in regular classrooms. Academic performance varies based on the quality of services they received, timing of the end of services, segregation within schools, and access to high quality programs.

**Newcomer ELLs** are new or recent immigrants. These first-generation immigrants tend to perform better than their peers, though they lag in graduation rates. This is a small subset of the larger ELL population.

## Many Texas schools are failing to effectively serve ELLs

ELL students are among the most likely to drop out. The Texas four-year longitudinal dropout rate for ELLs (Gr 9-12) is 38% compared to 12% for the state.

Only 1.5% (10 of 613) of secondary schools had a high proportion of ELL students passing all end-of-course exams.

Only 8% of ELL students were considered college-ready (in math & ELA) compared to 56% for all students.

A majority of ELL students are served in bilingual programs for a few years and are then transitioned to regular all-English curricula and instruction. But a portion are never provided appropriate program services and are underserved.

## Texas schools are ill equipped to serve ELLs

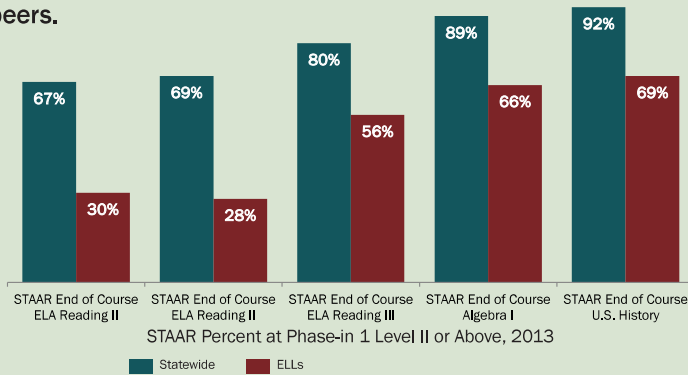
40% of elementary bilingual or ESL teachers and 35% of secondary ESL teachers in Texas are less than fully certified.

Texas provides only a 10% add-on funding for its bilingual and ESL programs. Since the adoption of the 10% add-on weights for bilingual and ESL programs in 1984, no change in those original weights has been adopted.

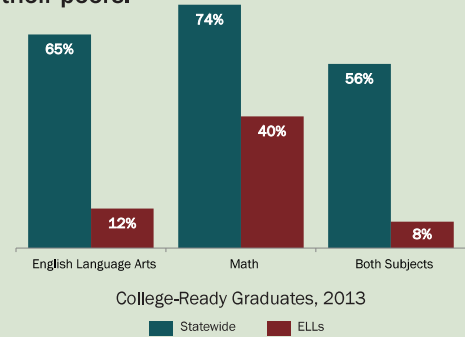
Schools with high concentrations of ELLs tend to have higher enrollments, higher student-to-teacher ratios, and are more likely to be Title I schools.

The first intensive federal monitoring of No Child Left Behind Act waivers shows states struggling help English learners adjust to new standards.

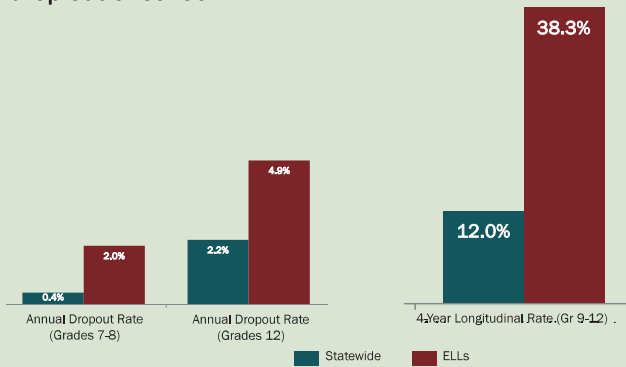
Secondary ELL students have significantly lower scores on STAAR end-of-course exams than their peers.



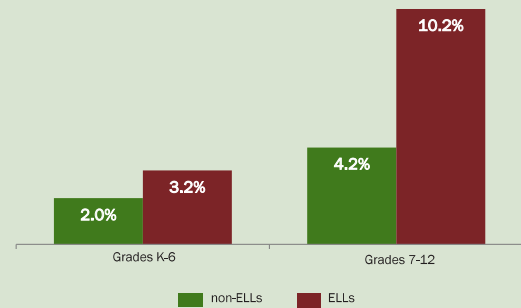
Dramatically fewer secondary ELL students meet college-readiness standards than their peers.



ELL students are more than twice as likely as their peers to drop out of school.

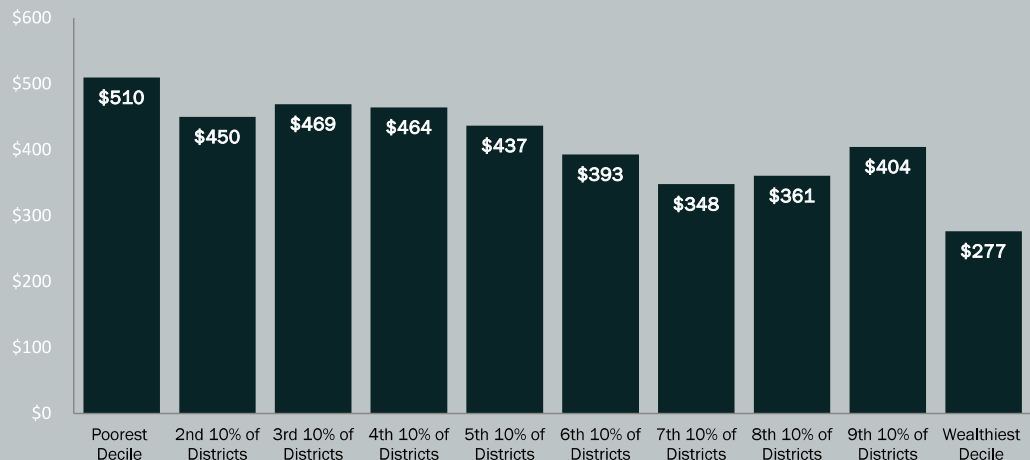


Secondary ELL students are more than twice as likely as their peers to be retained in grade.



\* Source: 2014 Comprehensive Biennial Report on Texas Public Schools, Texas Education Agency

IDRA's expert report presented in the *Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition vs. Michael Williams, et al.*, case found that, if compensatory education & bilingual/ESL funding weights were increased to a 40% add-on, school districts would receive significant additional revenue per student (per WADA).



Report of the Intercultural Development Research Association Related to the Extent of Equity in the Texas School Finance System and Its Impact on Selected Student Related Issues  
Prepared for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, August 2012



“Before conducting this study, I had a perception that Texas was at the leading edge of educating English language learners. Coming from Arizona...with its high anti-immigrant sentiment, ELL education policy that commonly violates civil rights and goes contrary to research-based decision making, and also based on Texas’ experience in educating ELLs...and a law promoting bi-literacy, at least in theory, I was expecting to find real solutions to national issues related to secondary English language learners... But the results reveal that Texas is not the utopia for secondary English language learners, that I believed I would find.”

– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

## Examining School Funding and Academic Achievement for Secondary English Language Learners in Texas – A Synthesis

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**Synthesis of Presentation Made by Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Ph.D.,**  
**2014 IDRA José A. Cárdenas**  
**School Finance Fellow**  
**Associate Professor, Mary Lou**  
**Fulton Teachers College, Arizona**  
**State University**

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*This section is an overview of the comments and major findings expressed in Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos’ presentation. Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos presented his findings on the status of ELL students in Texas from his study, “Examining School Funding and Academic Achievement for Secondary English Language Learners in Texas.” His presentation established a basis for the conversation about the status of ELLs in secondary education, and the many steps that need to be taken on all levels to improve education for this underserved group of students, particularly where funding is concerned. His written study is on Page 24.*

### Background Information

#### Identifying ELLs at the Secondary Level

- Over 11 million school-age children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

- The State of Texas enrolls the second largest population of K-12 ELLs nationally with over 800,000 students –approximately 17 percent of Texas’ K-12 population (Flores, et al., 2012).
- Prosperity of ELLs in our educational system has significant economic and social implications for the United States (Hart & Eisenbarth Hager, 2012)
- Texas defines an ELL student as “a student whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English.”

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos introduced the topic of ELLs by reiterating that it is a myth that these young men and women are a homogenous group of students. ELLs come from different countries, races, socio-economic backgrounds, and with parents of varying educational levels. The languages these students speak vary along with their countries of origin, though the primary language that 90 percent of ELLs speak in Texas is Spanish.

It is also important to note that the number of students classified as “ELLs” by the Texas educational system drops significantly from primary to secondary school because many are considered proficient and thus reclassified. For the purposes of this study, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos



identified three primary types of ELLs at the secondary level. They are:

- **Long-Term ELLs:** Students who have been classified as ELLs for more than six years. “These represent over half of secondary ELLs – between 59 percent and 70 percent.”
- **Recent Arrivals:** Students who are new to the country or state to include undocumented youth, refugees, and those who enter from another school system.
- **Reclassified ELLs:** Students who are no longer considered to be ELLs by their school system. It often is a misperception that these students are fully English language proficient and can be left underserved.

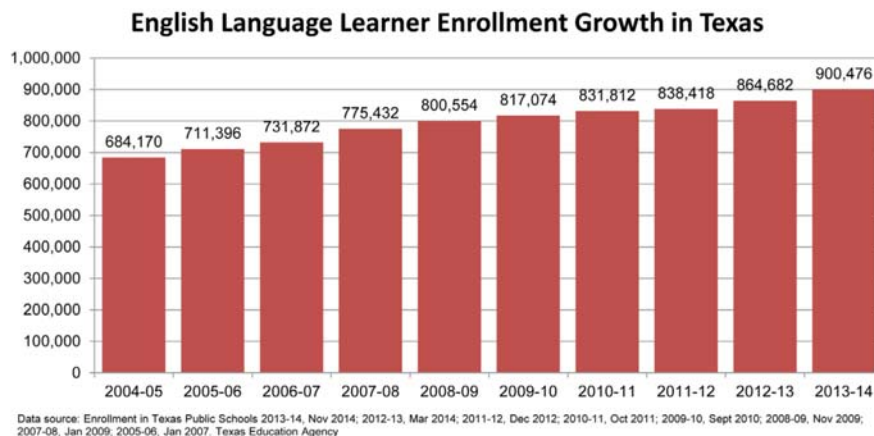
### Issues Faced by ELLs

- ELLs are one of the lowest academically performing groups of students in K-12 schools.
- On average, ELLs scored 41 percent below their native English-speaking peers on the eighth grade NAEP reading assessment (NCES, 2007).
- The achievement gap widens considerably as students progress through school (Kim & García, 2014).

The major issues ELLs face at the secondary level as described by Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos include high rates of poverty, mobility, attending segregated schools, and the natural challenges inherent in being immersed into English-content and high-stakes testing before many are ready. This not only leads to poor academic achievement in comparison to their native-English-speaking peers but also fewer students prepared for college and higher rates of dropouts. These outcomes can be changed with improved educational services.

### ELL Funding

- All public schools in Texas, both traditional independent school districts and charter school districts, receive state revenue



- funds based on the average daily attendance (ADA) of students.
- Specifically, the Texas school funding mechanism — called the Texas Foundation School Program (FSP) — is the source of state funding for all Texas school districts.
- The foundation formula consists of a basic allotment per student and a series of weighted adjustments that account for differences in student and district characteristics.
- Texas HB 72 (1984) developed a weighted revenue component as part of the FSP for students needing bilingual and special language instructional programs.
- This bill provided an additional revenue amount of 0.10 per ELL student enrolled in bilingual or special language programs
- The weighting factor is based largely on legislative, political, and fiscal considerations of the time, not on empirical evidence of student learning needs (Baker & Duncombe, 2004; Cárdenas, 1997).

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos emphasized the fact that Texas serves bilingual students enrolled in English language programs, not all ELL students. This is an important distinction to make because this is not the case in other states. Texas will only provide ELL funds to students who are enrolled in bilingual programs. “A school needs 20 or more bilingual students in a

single grade level to be mandated to provide these programs. Approximately 50,000 students in 2012 did not receive this funding [because they were not provided specialized instruction].”

The formula that was agreed upon for weighting ELLs in these special programs was established in the 1980s and has not been changed to reflect the times or recent research. Research suggests that these students need better base funding to achieve academic success. Bilingual

**“The better ELL students do in our educational system, the more productive our economy will be, thus helping Texas in their tax revenue and our economy nationwide.”**

– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

education is actually the lowest weight for special characteristics. The starkest contrast of these special funding characteristics is between the ELL weight (0.10) and special education’s 12 weights (1.7 to 5.0), the latter of which is based on the duration of the services and location of the instruction.

As context for this study, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos reminded the assembled participants that there are currently two lawsuits being litigated in Texas: *Texas Taxpayers and Student Fairness Coalition et al. vs. Williams* in which

the Texas District Court ruled that the Texas school finance system violates the Texas Constitution, and *LULAC vs. Texas* which focuses on secondary ELL programs. His study comes at an important time in the overall conversation of public school funding because it adds to a body of research informing the many voices demanding more equity and fair funding for ELL students in the interest not only of their futures, but of the economic future of the state and country.

## Research Questions

The study of funding of programs for secondary level ELL students was guided by a set of research questions.

- How many secondary schools met Texas' academic benchmark with ELLs?

- Are there any statistical differences in school characteristics and expenditures per pupil between the highest and lowest performing secondary schools with ELLs in Texas?
- What are some characteristics of effective secondary schools with ELLs?
- What does the current literature tell us about the cost to adequately fund ELL students?

Data were gathered from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The unit of analysis is individual school level data. Data were collected for three academic years: 2010, 2011 and 2012. These are the most recent years available for both AEIS and PEIMS data to be merged.

All secondary schools in Texas were stratified by quintiles based on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS (all tests) passing rates for ELLs. The quintiles are, essentially, comparisons of top performing students versus those students on the bottom. A one-way ANOVA comparison of means analysis was conducted to examine the difference in school characteristics and expenditure levels between the highest and lowest ELL achievement quintile schools.

He also pointed out that his study does not focus on examining issues of equity based on concentrations of poverty, Latino, or ELLs. It is not an efficiency analysis or an empirical cost-study analysis to determine the actual cost. This study is designed to place at the analytical focus secondary ELLs and their academic achievement to examine the role funding plays.

### 2012 School Expenditures: Descriptive Statistics by Quintile

Quintile	Cost Per Student Total Expenditure			Cost Per Student Total Other Expenditure			Cost of Student Instruction			Cost Per Student of Regular Programs			Cost Per Student With Disabilities		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Top	109	8338.66	4441.32	109	1500.58	1132.42	109	5642.98	3465.06	109	4820.93	2698.94	94	664.79	20.85
Second	117	7620.98	2429.30	117	1038.19	776.82	117	5186.51	1691.56	116	4026.42	1352.53	116	764.12	22.14
Third	132	7407.93	1779.79	132	1144.06	957.22	132	5023.38	975.16	132	3945.66	877.15	128	748.76	20.69
Fourth	167	7480.61	1761.65	167	957.32	576.20	167	5037.72	1072.78	167	3954.50	891.43	167	749.52	21.37
Bottom	135	7526.37	2414.14	135	984.84	533.98	135	5030.41	1577.10	135	3779.22	909.32	134	989.29	22.00

### 2012 School Demographics: Descriptive Statistics by Quintile

Quintile	Percent Mobility			Campus Size			Percent Bilingual/ESL			Percent Economically Disadvantaged			Percent Enrolled In Special Education			Percent Minority		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Top	109	13.93	15.47	113	742.59	833.50	112	7.43	12.09	113	59.44	27.37	108	7.58	5.62	113	72.48	28.32
Second	117	17.09	12.97	119	1437.82	1005.20	118	6.72	8.12	118	52.66	27.72	119	9.72	4.30	119	65.50	27.61
Third	132	17.05	10.06	137	1595.28	1009.94	137	9.45	13.54	137	57.99	23.29	136	9.13	3.20	137	72.49	23.92
Fourth	167	18.20	10.30	168	1696.02	841.42	168	7.31	7.78	168	57.26	23.86	168	9.59	2.97	168	73.12	23.93
Bottom	135	19.17	9.63	138	1721.63	842.97	137	8.34	12.09	138	66.41	20.40	138	11.20	8.16	138	78.41	21.34

### 2012 School Academic Performance: Descriptive Statistics By Quintile

Quintile	Non-Spanish TAKS Grade 10 LEP All Tests Rate			LEP Rate Of Participation In Advanced Courses			LEP Attendance Rate			Percent Both College Ready			Graduation Rate		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Top	113	84.72	18.43	72	39.09	29.09	108	96.25	2.63	12	46.67	28.91	42	85.67	20.85
Second	119	43.90	5.95	84	19.57	16.84	117	94.67	3.08	28	16.54	10.84	80	71.39	22.14
Third	137	30.69	2.50	113	15.91	16.19	132	94.13	4.09	38	19.08	22.46	107	72.41	20.69
Fourth	168	21.18	2.93	156	14.57	13.47	167	93.92	2.44	43	17.53	23.91	143	69.60	21.37
Bottom	138	11.36	3.25	122	13.79	11.41	134	93.19	3.02	14	25.07	32.25	121	60.28	22.00

## Results (2012)

### How Current ELL Programs are Supporting ELLs at the Secondary Level

- The majority of secondary schools have masked ELL achievement data across years.
- Very few secondary Texas schools are meeting academic benchmarks with ELLs
- There is a significant achievement

**“There are very few schools that met Texas’ academic benchmark for ELLs. Less than 20 schools in any given year in the study – representing between 2 percent and 2.5 percent of schools statewide – met the benchmark. Only two schools in the state of Texas sustained ELL academic performance across three years.”**

– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

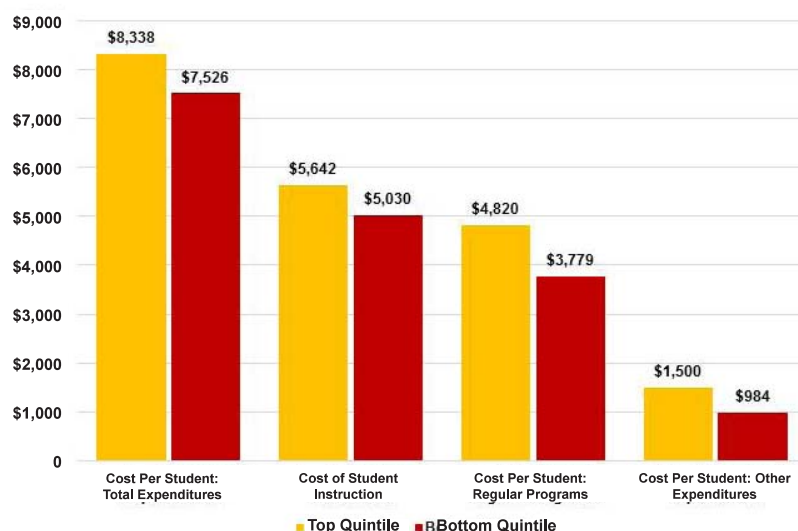
gap between the highest and lowest ELL achievement quintile schools: 84.72 percent and 11.36 percent, respectively.

- There are significant differences in school demographics between

the lowest and highest ELL achievement quintile schools.

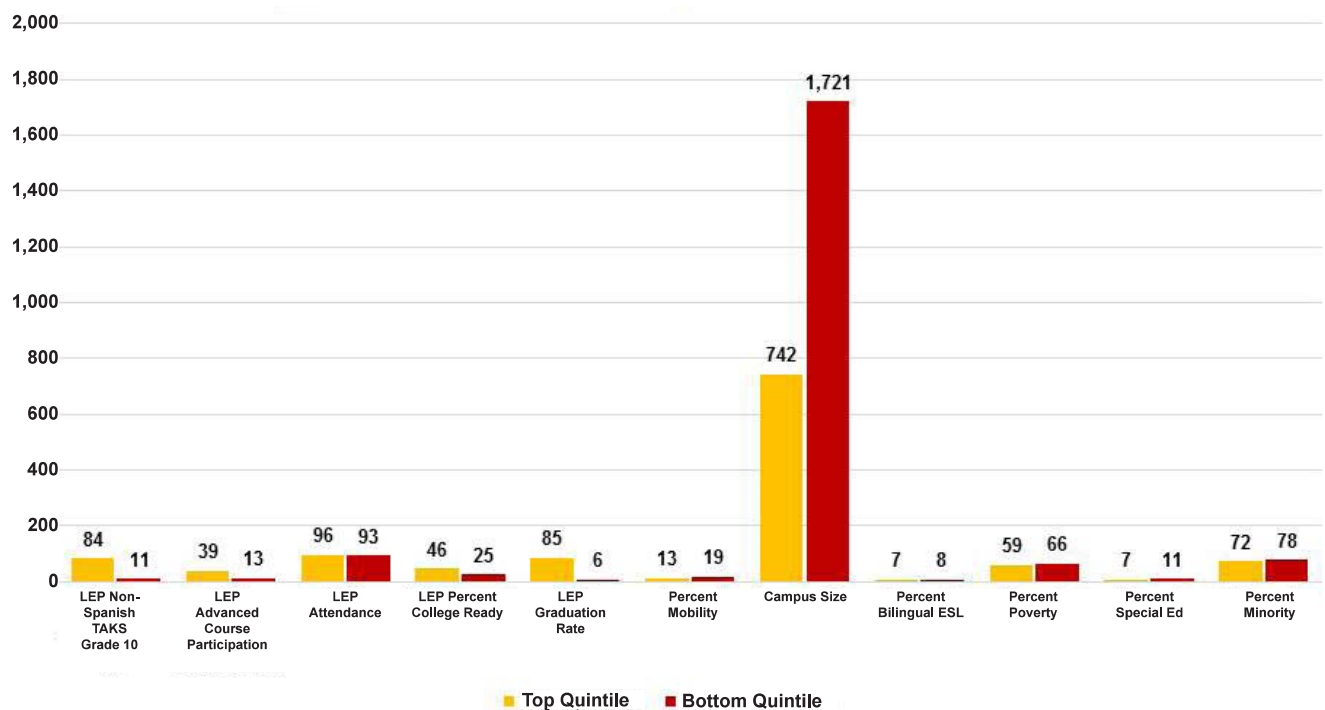
- The highest ELL achievement quintile schools expend significantly more general funds than the lowest ELL achievement quintile schools. This difference in expenditures increased from 2010 to 2012.

**2012 Expenditures: Top and Bottom Quintiles**



Concerning academic performance, the difference between the top and bottom quintiles continues to be statistically significant in 2012. Demographic data were fairly standard between all three of the years, with a slight decrease in the gap of poverty between the quintiles in 2012. The gap in minority concentrations also decreased in 2012. All of these demographic differences are statistically significant except for the percentage of ELL students. The expenditure data show the major, emerging trend identified in the study that builds from 2010 – the gap in

**2012 School Characteristics: Top and Bottom Quintiles**



total expenditure per pupil is now \$800 per pupil. It has increased since 2010. The gap in foundation per-pupil expenditure is now \$1,000 per pupil.

## Defining Success with Current ELL students

Part of Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos' study included conducting interviews with principals to point out the factors that led to high academic achievement for ELLs in their programs. The principals he spoke with were from schools that reached ELL academic performance defined as a 75 percent passing rate for ELLs in 10<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS (all tests) in at least one academic year between 2010 and 2012.

The major factors that contributed to their students' success were:

- Having high expectations for ELLs focused on career and post-secondary readiness.
- Creating a "culture of family" and collaboration to serve ELLs.
- Implementing purposeful and differentiated instruction tailored for ELLs.
- Having highly trained and motivated teachers and staff to serve ELLs.

**"Sixty percent of the schools had masked or missing data"**  
– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

The principals also stated that more resources are needed to sustain high ELL academic performance. As the symposium continued, participants in the symposium reiterated many of these "ingredients" as necessary components of a successful ELL program.

As part of his presentation, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos detailed the factors of the system that need to be added, considered, or changed to increase the quality of education for ELLs. These include:

- Implement a well-defined, rigorously structured plan of instruction for ELLs.
- Differentiate instructional techniques and strategies to effectively deliver instruction for ELL students.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive, coherent assessment program that spans the school, district, and state levels needs to lead to a clear understanding of ELLs' language, literacy, and content-area competencies and instructional needs.
- Make reforms to ensure teachers are skilled in addressing the needs of ELLs.
- Regularly adjust instructional planning based on student performance is essential for sustaining effective instruction for all ELLs.
- Native speaker classes in which the students have the opportunity to develop language and literacy skills in their native language, like Spanish for Spanish speakers (through Advanced Placement levels).
- Systems for monitoring progress and triggering support.
- An expanded focus on study skills.

Districts piloting these approaches report more student engagement, fewer course failures, increased college-going rates, and improved California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) passage (Olson, 2010).

## What works for recent arrivals:

Effective strategies include accurately determining where the student is academically, based on the family's education level and the student's own history; integrating these students with English-speaking peers where necessary to encourage the development of English; forging partnerships with newcomer schools; and ensuring that there are quality, AP level courses in the students' native language so that they can continue to develop their academic skills in their native language while learning English.

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos returned to the three primary types of ELL students at the secondary level and described what seems to work best for each type of student based on available literature.

## What works for long-term

**ELLs:** Evidence demonstrates the importance of focusing on supplementing ELL students' education while ensuring that they are receiving high-quality academic courses in their native language to encourage the development of academic skills while they are still learning English. Consistency and clarity also are important.

- A specialized English language development course.
- Clustered placement in rigorous grade-level content classes mixed with English proficient students and taught with differentiated SDAIE (specially designed academic instruction in English) strategies.
- Explicit language and literacy development across the curriculum.
- Some ESL or bilingual education students, upon arrival, consistently reported higher grades than students who had received no second language instruction (Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002).
- Place secondary newcomer ELLs in the lower of the two age-appropriate grades (Conger, 2013).
- Newcomer programs (Short & Boyson, 2012).
- AP courses delivered in students' native language.

Daoud (2003) found that ELL students who interacted with their English-speaking peers had more access to vital cultural and linguistic knowledge.



### What works for reclassified ELLs:

Effective strategies include proper and accurate reclassification (Abedi, 2008; Robinson, 2011), support and monitoring after reclassification (Kim & García, 2014), and access to a rigorous curriculum (Forrest, 2006; Soto, 2011).

### Recommendations for Funding of ELL Programs

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos reviewed more than 70 studies on school finance, which included studies on ELLs. The major findings are:

- There have been few cost studies conducted since 2000.
- Most studies conducted used a cost function analysis and none explicitly provided a specific recommendation for ELL funding; however, they suggested that more resources were needed for ELLs.
- States in general are not allocating sufficient funds to adequately educate the general K-12 population, including ELLs (Robledo Montecel & Cortez, 2008).
- ELLs are inconsistently addressed across the cost study literature (Millard, 2015).
- Current costing out methods need to be adapted to better account

for the diverse and complex needs of the ELL student population. (Jimenez-Castellanos & Topper, 2012)

Concerning his overall study, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos stated:

- This study suggests that the Texas school funding system is inadequate, both in terms of general and supplemental funding, to support and sustain secondary ELLs meeting Texas' academic benchmarks.
- Very few secondary schools across the state are meeting Texas' academic benchmarks for ELL students.
- Current supplemental ELL funding levels are insufficient to support high ELL student outcomes.
- ELL supplemental funding, albeit necessary in isolation, is insufficient to support high ELL academic outcomes if the underlying academic program itself is underfunded.
- It is important for ELLs to have a well-funded regular program and access to rigorous coursework while being held to high expectations to meet high academic benchmarks set by the State of Texas.

He also spoke to the reasons it is so important to properly increase the weight of funding for ELL students at the secondary level. These include the fact that high schools are more expensive, they require support services, programs vary by district or the size of the school, some schools have higher concentrations of ELLs, and, as previously stated, ELLs speak a number of different languages and have varied needs. Texas should increase base funding to support a high quality regular program for ELLs and all students. Concerning base funding, he recommended raising the weight from 0.10 to 0.50 at a minimum.

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos concluded his presentation by restating that there is more at stake with secondary

**"Schools that are achieving better with English language learners are expending more money. "**

– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

ELLs than just failing standardized tests or the reality of low academic achievement. These are *our* children and our future and we have an obligation to see that they receive an education that gives them the same opportunities, the same choices and options available as their native-English speaking peers. The answer is to lift these students up with the proper funding, teachers, and a rigorous environment; to make it clear that we expect the best from them so that they may finally achieve their potential.

See Page 24 for the written research study and citations.

Sample Cost Study Results	
Authors	ELL Adjustment/ Weight
Augenblick & Myers (2001, 2002, 2003)	0.14 to 1.25
Augenblick, Paliach & Associates (2003a, b)	0.60 to 2.04
Duncombe & Yinger (2005)	1.01 to 1.4
META Inc. (2008)	0.46 to 0.64
Kansas Legislative Division (2006)	0.10
Oregon Quality Education Commission (2000)	0.50
Picus & Associates (2006)	1 FTE per 100 ELLs
Standard & Poor (2004)	1.2



“We need to get people concerned and talking about these populations of kids who have been disenfranchised, underserved, poorly served, in our public schools. We are never going to be any better until we learn to do better and we will never do better until we are committed to that; until it is our intention to do better by students.”

– Bradley Scott, Ph.D., Director,  
South Central Collaborative for  
Equity, IDRA

## Synthesis of Participant Presentations and Discussion

*This section is a synthesis of the discussions by the panelists, questions and answers to these men and women, the brief interviews with participants, and the group discussion session over five vitally important questions that were intended to create discussion and reflection about the issue of ELL education. The synthesis represents the topics, questions, and issues that were both apparent and important throughout the discussion.*

### Topic: Supporting the Future, Acting Now

#### Major Issue: Uniting for Justice

Helping ELLs achieve their potential is first and foremost an issue of justice. Though not every person will be swayed by the needs of the disadvantaged, it is apparent that those who attended the symposium were there because they genuinely care about ELL children. There were numerous moments throughout the proceedings that participants indicated that there needs to be a shift between how we are collectively thinking of and referring to ELL

students. Arguably, one of the most detrimental factors that continues to contribute to apathy and a lack of funding for specialized programs necessary for the education of ELL students is the “them versus us” mindset. Thinking of these children and “their problems” as unimportant or rightfully deserved only hurts the process of positive change and reform based on the need for equity and justice.

#### Major Issue: The Economic Future of Texas and the United States

For those who are not as invested in helping children who have been disenfranchised due to their race, gender, economic status, ethnicity, national origin, or primary language, there is the grim reality that our state and nation’s economic future is in peril if we do nothing to rectify the disproportionate number of ELLs who are dropping out of school and, worse, being funneled directly into the criminal justice system. The participants, researchers, and panelists were in agreement that many schools are failing these young men and women and are losing



“The risk is not only that we’re losing students, but that they are not prepared to be the workforce of the future. Specifically, the minority students who are emerging as the majority in this country have to build the economy of the United States, and we’re not going to be prepared as a nation to do that.”

– Rebeca Barrera, M.A., Director, Latino Initiatives,  
Scholastic

them at a young age. Investing in education is important to the business community as well. If the private sector cannot find the highly skilled employees they need and will continue to need in the future, they have to expend more resources to train workers. Plus, the ability to speak multiple languages is an asset.

Bringing the topic back around to the students themselves is vitally important. IDRA's Dr. Albert Cortez encapsulated this notion when he said that improving the state of education for ELLs will not only lead to greater economic success but also greater individual outcomes. Studies have shown that people who have better education have better health, which leads to more satisfaction in personal as well as professional endeavors.

### Topic: Funding, or "Money Matters"

First and foremost, one major issue with the funding of ELLs is that the money being provided for these students is based upon old, out-dated information. Where funding is concerned, ELL education at the secondary level is trapped in the early 1980s. Many participants expressed frustration about the funding for education of ELL students and the programs that see to their academic progress.

Aside from the prevalent issue of discrimination and apathy, Dr. Julian Vasquez Heilig contributed to the discussion with another mitigating factor to the issue of under-funding.



**not effectively educate our ELL students we as a community lose them and lose all that they might have contributed to our collective well-being. Our failure stays with us forever."**

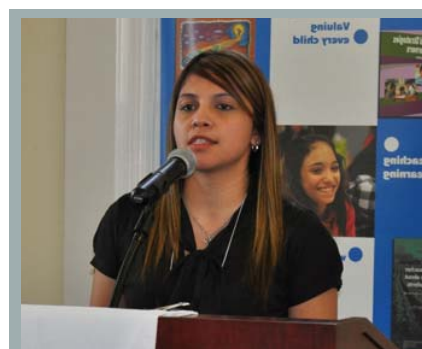
– Albert Cortez, Ph.D., Director of Policy, IDRA

Specifically, he stated that Texas funds its schools "backward" rather than forward. By this, he meant that the Texas legislature decides on a number that they wish to spend on public schools and then try and fit the funding and special needs of said public schools to that number, rather than first understanding the minimum price necessary for an equitable education and moving from there.

An additional mitigating factor is a general lack of unity or classification of ELL programs. One participant indicated that we need to collectively decide on an acronym and move away from ELL programs being called "pilots," as those receive fewer funds, limited time, and need to prove success every step of the way.

### Major Issue: Increasing the Weight Formula for ELLs

The research presented by Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos early in the day provided the pertinent data for the discussions to include the incredibly important factor of "student weight"



**"Having more funding to be able to provide tutor support in the classrooms makes a lot of difference. The tutors work with ELL kids in small groups, and that is what they need so they feel comfortable enough to ask questions and to clarify misunderstandings."**

– Martha Alonso, M.B.A., ELL Transition Coach, John Paul Stevens High School, Northside ISD

for funding ELLs. Participants considered the idea of increasing the weight for ELL students from the current 0.10 that has been in place since the early 1980s to the minimum recommendation of 0.50.

They agreed that this is a necessary step, but discussion gave way to the question of how to best structure and target funding; there was a suggestion that student weight be put on a scale that mirrored that of special education funding and be provided based on the need of the student rather than a general amount for being classified as an ELL student. One participant urged caution about approaching the funding of ELLs the same way that we approach special education students.



**"Money only doesn't matter when we're talking about poor kids. When we're talking about Westlake, money matters. When we're talking about northwestern San Antonio, money matters; but when we're talking about poor kids in central cities, all of a sudden, money doesn't matter."**

– Julian Vasquez Heilig, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, California State University, Sacramento





**"Texas needs to do better in investing in education for the Latino students who are projected to be the future labor force of this state."**

– Senator José Rodríguez,  
Texas Senate, D-29

While the idea of funding a student or a program based on actual need rather than a flat rate is appealing, we need to be careful not to mistake ELLs for students with disabilities. This is an important concern to note because of the history of bilingual education and the routine habit of those in charge of ELLs in the past placing these children into special education simply because they could not pass assessments in English.

### **Major Issue: Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability**

Schools should be spending funds where they are needed, toward a



**"Schools that spend more money do better for ELL students."**

–Albert Kauffman, J.D., Professor of  
Law, St. Mary's University

**"Why do it now? It's the law. It's not something that is really a choice. Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VI that said you have to grant children meaningful access to an education."**

– Gerardo Rojas, Civil Rights Staff Attorney,  
Office for Civil Rights, Dallas



high-quality education. One of the roundtable discussions touched on this issue and the participants agreed that accountability needs to continue to be a big issue for schools to make sure that they are spending properly while meeting the needs of ELLs.

Related to the issue of money going where it is needed is the focus of the symposium itself on secondary education. Rebeca Barrera, M.A., director of Latino Initiatives for Scholastic, reminded participants that funding at the secondary level needs due attention from policymakers because the emphasis on ELL education in elementary school often means there are fewer funds for middle and high school programs.

### **Topic: Quality Teachers, Quality Curriculum**

Without question, teachers are some of the most vital contributors to a quality education. Unfortunately, the reality of Texas schools right now is that we do not have enough qualified ESL teachers to properly support ELL students for a number of reasons that the panelists and participants discussed throughout the symposium. It is a problem because it covers not only the pipeline from being educated to becoming a teacher but also teachers who are already in the schools and attempting to provide the best education they can with limited resources.

### **Major Issue: Teacher Support and Retention**

Too often, teachers are using low-wealth districts with high numbers of ELLs to "cut their teeth" and gain experience so that they may move on to higher-paying jobs. One conclusion that participants seemed to agree on across the board was that ESL teachers need incentives. Though money is just one way of compensating them, there was also a strong emphasis on teacher support, education, and ensuring that they have decent classrooms and research-based materials at their disposal.

### **Major Issue: Teacher Education and Certification**

One participant asked panelists about whether or not universities were producing quality ESL teachers at the secondary level in light of the focus on educating teachers to teach at the primary level. Veronica Alvarez, M.A., bilingual/ESL/GT/LOTE coordinator at Harlandale ISD, reminded participants that ESL at the secondary



**"It's not only about providing adequate funding for ELL students but also making sure that they're getting that high quality curriculum."**

– Celina Moreno, J.D., Legislative Staff  
Attorney, MALDEF





**“We can put students in a classroom and they’re not going to flourish if the teacher is not willing to support them.”**  
 – Veronica Alvarez, M.A., Bilingual/ESL/GT/LOTE Coordinator, Harlandale ISD

level is usually done as “sheltered instruction,” which generally means that the content-area teachers have had a couple of days of training, on average. ESL teachers who are bilingual certified at the secondary level work in dual language programs, which are not nearly as populous in middle and high schools.

Eddie Rodriguez, Ph.D., principal of Harlandale STEM Early College High School, also said that there is a problem with how we are approach

just ELLs. Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos contributed to the discussion as well and stated that the biggest issue currently related to teacher quality is the prevalence of alternatively certified teachers. He stated that 60 percent of all teachers in Texas right now have alternative certification.

Concerning current efforts in the area of teacher education, Our Lady of the Lake University is pioneering the ESL teacher educational process, but one major issue that the university has seen is that many otherwise qualified young men and women who enter the educational program, and who are ELLs themselves, do not pursue a career as an ESL teacher. This is especially important to note because we already do not have enough ESL teachers to meet the demands of the growing ELL population.

### **Major Issue: Appropriate, Research-Based Materials**

The issue of school districts having immense difficulties in securing proper materials necessary for ELLs came up many times throughout the panel and group discussions. It is a difficult problem to address because of a general lack of understanding about ELL needs by those in charge

of funding. It is also an issue of deviating from the materials being taught in general education. Publishers are generating academic materials based around the core curriculum, but “the Core” does not provide the resources necessary for an ESL program. As a result, these educators and administrators bring in materials suitable for ESL but oftentimes get into trouble because they aren’t using the core curriculum. The decision about materials needs to be made with input of researchers and educators to determine which materials are going to be effective and allow students to meet high educational standards.

### **Topic: Assessment and Accountability**

The issue of assessments was brought up many times during the discussions. Some participants were vocal about the need for changing the current system because high-stakes testing, the system we currently are using in this state, only hurts students in the end. Other participants suggested caution about getting on the “anti-testing bandwagon” because assessments are always necessary, but even those who endorsed a more cautious approach agreed that we need to change and improve what we have now.

The changes that California has made to its ESL funding system were brought up as a slightly better example of funding for special programs because they incentivize progress and properly monitoring it, making programs that serve ELLs accountable



**“[In an earlier school district of mine, I saw that] instead of identifying students into the ELL bilingual program, they were being pushed off into the Special Education program...Those are the types of things that happen in school districts all over the state of Texas and frankly all over the country.”**

– Abelardo Saavedra, Ph.D.,  
 Superintendent of Schools,  
 South San Antonio ISD

certification. Many teachers currently being put in our schools obtain a “generalist” certification which means that they are too often put into the area of greatest need. In most cases, that means they are in mathematics classrooms and so do not necessarily have adequate personal knowledge or training in this particular content area. These practices only weaken the education of all students, not

**Funding is needed for “educational materials that are in fact research based, that they’re not just fly-by-night materials that we’re constantly seeing come up and go, and people, are just making money and nothing has changed. If we had been using research-based materials from the very start we wouldn’t have the dilemma that we have right now.”**

– Eddie Rodríguez, Ph.D., Principal,  
 STEM Early College High School, Harlandale ISD





"It's important that, whatever accountability mechanisms we move toward, we don't move away from having data that allow us, at a statewide level, to know how our kids are doing...our next steps have to include accountability systems that do not hurt children, that don't have the kinds of high-stakes testing that Julian was talking about, but at the same time, allow us to disaggregate and know how we're doing about groups of kids in the state."

– María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.,  
President & CEO, IDRA



"It has to be a comprehensive solution that has a marriage between education policy and the research that shows what can work."

– David G. Hinojosa, J.D., Southwest  
Regional Counsel, MALDEF  
(as of April 2105, IDRA National Policy  
Director)

for their successes and failures. The participant who introduced this topic indicated that, through this monitoring, if these programs meet the goals that have been set, and these are goals beyond standardized testing, they receive additional funding. That is in stark contrast to the compliance, bare-minimum approach that Texas takes to funding bilingual education.

### Topic: Partnerships

Partnerships between policy and research, stakeholders in education, and those in charge of writing policy and funding this endeavor are absolutely necessary to make any progress in providing an equitable education to ELLs. We also need to forge a link between, as Rogelio Sáenz, Ph.D., dean of the College of Public Policy and Peter Flawn Professor of Demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio, stated, policy and demography. This means assisting those in charge of funding and regulating our public school system to understand how the Latino, ELL population is growing in Texas and the vital need to address the inadequacies in the current system. The future of countless individuals is at stake.

### Major Issue: The Impact of Newcomer Centers for Recent Arrivals

Newcomer Centers were brought up several times throughout the day. Participants who had been involved with such centers, such as Abelardo Savaadra, Ph.D., superintendent of South San Antonio ISD, observed that they were immensely helpful in assisting recent immigrant students to transition to a school environment. Partnerships need to be forged between these centers and ESL programs to assess where immigrants are in relation to their education and go from there with the proper support in place.

who need it the most. This harks back to the idea of a partnership between all the stakeholders in education. Policymakers need to work with researchers, educators, administrators, and the people they serve to eventually arrive at solutions that will work and promote a quality education for all children.

"We have a field that is maturing. There are a lot of people who are doing work in the area of English language learning and in the area of heritage speakers of Spanish. Some companies are coming up with the capacity of developing materials that are much higher quality and a curriculum that is in Spanish. Best practices are beginning to emerge... Now is the time to seize that moment and to work with those resources that we do have."

– Ezequiel Peña, Ph.D., Associate Professor of  
Psychology, Director, Center for Mexican American  
Studies & Research at Our Lady of the Lake University



### Major Issue: Utilizing the Wealth of Research Available

Another issue is putting applicable research to work in our schools through policy. The studies and information exist, but they do not make it all the way to the people

## Parting Words



Student guest, Raquel Mijares providing parting words to the symposium participants. Ms. Mijares is president of the Bilingual Education Student Organization (BESO) at Our Lady of the Lake University. Entering public school as an English language learner herself, she is now earning her bachelor's degree to become a bilingual education teacher. Members of her family, including her grandmother, Reyna A. Rodriguez, and siblings, Juan Josue Mijares and Ruth V. Mijares, joined her at the symposium.







“There needs to be a transformation involving policymakers shifting the view of these children as ‘their children’ and to embrace these kids as ‘our children.’ There needs to be a view supported by resources and high expectations, that every English language learner, every Latino child, every African American child, is capable of excelling academically.”

– Rogelio Sáenz, Ph.D., UTSA College of Public Policy

## Remarks by Rogelio Sáenz, Ph.D. – Symposium Panel Discussant

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**Rogelio Sáenz, Ph.D.**  
Dean of the College of Public  
Policy and Peter Flawn Professor  
of Demography at the University of  
Texas at San Antonio

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*The following remarks were presented at the IDRA Symposium on New Research on Securing Educational Equity and Excellence for English Language Learners in Texas Secondary Schools.*

I thank Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos for his important research and the policy recommendations that he makes.

I will speak here as a sociologist, demographer, and public policy analyst.

I have conducted demographic analysis examining the demography of Latino children as well as the state of Latino children in the country. My research calls attention to the major importance of Latino children in the future of the United States and Texas due to their major growth. The research also calls attention to the educational challenges that Latino children continue to experience and the major implications associated with the failure of policymakers to make significant investments in educating and preparing Latino youth for a labor force that is increasingly technological and global. Thus, there is an important dimension that comes out of this

research related to the intersection between demography and education.

Yet, my own research as well as that of my demographer colleagues tends to examine Latino children as a whole. While we recognize the diversity of Latino children with respect to nativity status (where they are born), language, socioeconomic level, etc., there has not been much attention specifically to English language learners, which as Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos’ research clearly demonstrates represent one of the fastest growing segments of the K-12 population. Statistics such as, “One in nine U.S. students are learning English as a second language and one in six Texas students,” amply demonstrate the significance of this population. Demographers will need to consider directly English language learners in order to more fully comprehend the social, economic, demographic, and educational realities of Latino children.

The research that is being highlighted here also represents a clarion call to policymakers in Texas about the major need to address the gaping inequities that continue to characterize the funding of education in the state and the need to invest in English language learners. Indeed, among Latino children — who I consider the engine of the future of the United States and Texas — English language learners are embedded in extremely poor neighborhoods,



schools, and communities that make it very challenging and costly to overcome these barriers in order to put these children on an equal playing field academically. As Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos notes, “Unfortunately, ELLs tend to experience high rates of poverty, higher mobility rates, attend segregated underfunded and unsafe schools compared to their non-ELL counterparts.” Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos’ research shows that English language learners do best in schools that are high achieving and well-funded.

The bill to educate these children is not cheap. Unfortunately, the mentality of policymakers is that “we can’t throw money at it.” As Jonathan Kozol, author of many books including *Savage Inequalities*, asserts, “Middle and upper class parents don’t have trouble throwing money at the education of their children.” The reality is that it is cheaper to invest in the education of English language learners — and more broadly Latino children — today than it will be to pay in the near future for the fallout of the failure to do so.

Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos’ research also supports the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce white paper titled “The Impact of Education on Economic Development in Texas,” with collaboration from IDRA and UTSA College of Public Policy. The white paper calls attention to the importance of addressing the educational needs of English language learners. Moreover, consistent with the research highlighted here today, the white paper puts forth four recommendations:

- Hold high expectations for every student from day one — and rigorously back them up at every opportunity
- Assure that all children are proficient in reading by the end of Grade 3
- Assure that all high school graduates are college-ready
- Increase college affordability and access

Finally, I want to address the implications of the research from a perspective of inclusion. The issue of race is increasingly masked, diluted, and made invisible. After all, many argue that we are beyond race, that race no longer matters, and that it has nothing to do with race. We are living in a time when it is a taboo to mention race despite the five ton pink elephant in the middle of the living room. Many policymakers and members of the general public see English language learner/Latino children are not seen as “our” children but rather as “their” children and see them as a “liability” rather than an “asset.” Comments such as “we can’t throw money at education” for “those” children are couched in time-worn stereotypes and images of English language learners/Latino children as people who are incapable of learning or succeeding. There needs to be a transformation involving policymakers shifting their view of these children as “their” children to “our” children. There needs to be a view — supported by resources and high expectations — that every English language learner/Latino/African American child is capable of excelling academically. In the end, given demographic trends, it is obvious that the futures of the United States and Texas are tied to the fortunes of English language learners — and more broadly Latino children.

In sum, Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos research has important implications for policymakers as well as sociologists, demographers, and public policy analysts, which I have briefly overviewed here.

*Note: The San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce white paper mentioned here is available online at: <http://budurl.com/SAHCCwp14>.*



“Supplemental is supplemental. It does not replace base funding... Base funding is what all students should receive, and many ELLs do not receive adequate base funding.”

– Dr. Jimenez-Castellanos

## **Examining School Funding and Academic Achievement for Secondary English Language Learners in Texas**

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**Research Report by Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos, Ph.D.,  
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### **Why focus on secondary ELLs in Texas?**

English language learners (ELLs) are one of the fastest growing K-12 populations across the nation. Over 11 million school-age children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). One in nine of today's public school students face the task of learning English as a second language. The State of Texas enrolls the second largest population of K-12 ELLs nationally with over 800,000 students – approximately 17 percent of Texas' K-12 population. Approximately 25 percent or 200,000 are secondary ELL students (Flores, et al., 2012). The number of ELLs in secondary schools tends to be lower due to the fact that many ELL students are reclassified to fluent English proficient by the time that they reach secondary grades (O'Conner, et al., 2012).

There is a great amount of diversity within ELLs. For instance, ELLs come from varying backgrounds, countries of origin, languages spoken, parent

education levels, and levels of formal schooling (Menken & Kleyn, 2011). Yet, the majority of ELLs are U.S. native born not foreign born. For instance, 59 percent of secondary and 85 percent of elementary students in Texas are born in the United States. Nevertheless, ELLs tend to experience higher rates of poverty and higher mobility rates and to attend segregated, underfunded and unsafe schools compared to their non-ELL counterparts (Fong, et al., 2010; Haas & Huang, 2010; Kim & García, 2014; Soto, 2011).

Unfortunately, ELLs are one of the lowest academically performing groups of students in K-12 schools. On an average, ELLs scored 41 percent below their native English-speaking peers on the eighth grade NAEP reading assessment (NCES, 2007). Not only is there an achievement gap between ELLs and their native speaking peers but the achievement gap widens considerably as student's progress through school (Kim & García, 2014). For example, an analysis of state standardized test scores among ELLs and non-ELLs in Delaware found that the achievement gap in math, reading, and science was wider in middle school and high school than in elementary school. Furthermore, by the time ELLs enroll in high school, they already are far behind their peers in English literacy achievement (O'Conner, et al., 2012). The pass rates of ELLs on mathematics high school exit exams

are 30 percent to 40 percent lower compared to those of other students (Xiong & Zhou, 2006).

Similarly to the Latino population, the prosperity of ELLs in our educational system has significant economic and social implications for the United States. The better ELLs do educationally, the more productive our economy will function in the future (Hart & Eisenbarth Hager, 2012). This study places the analytical focus on secondary ELLs to examine the role funding plays in their academic performance especially given the two ongoing Texas lawsuits: *Texas Taxpayers and Student Fairness Coalition, et al. vs. Williams*, which questions the overall adequacy, equity and efficiency of the funding system in Texas, and *LULAC vs. Texas*, which focuses on the appropriateness and effectiveness of secondary ELL programs.

### Three Types of Secondary ELLs

There are three primary types of ELLs enrolled at the secondary level: recent arrivals, long-term ELLs and reclassified ELLs.

**Recent arrivals** are those students who have been in the United States between zero and two years. Pompa (2009) highlights sub-groups of recent arrivals: (1) High school students who arrive in the United States fully proficient in their native language and with high levels of academic achievement. They may have limited or no English language skills; (2) High school-age students who arrive in the United States with limited literacy in their native language, limited exposure to academic skills, and little or no proficiency in English; (3) Students who arrive in the United States in the middle school years with limited literacy in their native language, limited exposure to academic skills, and little or no proficiency in English; and (4) Students who arrive in the United States in the middle school years, fully proficient in their native language and with high levels of academic achievement. They may

have limited or no English language skills.

Recent arrivals in secondary schools have many challenges. They must not only learn English in a short period of time but they must also take and pass content area courses to graduate from high school. Unlike native-born ELLs, newcomer ELLs must learn the cultural and societal norms of a new country (Kim & Garcia, 2014). The challenges associated with this are compounded by the fact that many newcomer ELLs are often socially isolated in schools and can be the targets of bullying (Daoud, 2003; Mendez, et al., 2012). Not surprisingly, Daoud (2003) found that immigrant Latino students who did not interact with their English-speaking peers had limited access to vital cultural and linguistic knowledge.

The strongest factors that predict successful integration of recent arrivals into U.S. schooling are parent educational level and primary language level. The higher the parents' educational level and the stronger their primary language skills the better recent arrivals tend to do academically (Conger, et al., 2011). However, there are other factors that seem to be important. For example, Padilla & Gonzalez (2001) found that college track students who had received some ESL or bilingual education upon arrival consistently reported higher grades than students who had received no second language instruction. Grade placement has been found to have a significant impact on student achievement as well. Conger (2013) reports that secondary newcomer ELLs who were placed in the lower of the two age-appropriate grades earned higher math and reading scores than those placed in the upper grade. Lower grade students were also reclassified sooner. This suggests that comprehensible input is important without compromising age appropriate placement.

**Long-term ELLs** are students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years and have

not acquired the English skills needed to pass the reclassification assessment. Long-term ELLs tend to fall into two groups: (1) transnational students who have moved back and forth between the United States and their family's country of origin and have attended school in both countries; and (2) students who have received inconsistent schooling in the United States, moving in and out of instructional programs, in particular English as a second language, and programs in which they received no language support services.

Researchers estimate that between 50 percent and 70 percent of secondary ELLs are long-term ELLs (Kim & García, 2014; Soto, 2011; Olson, 2010) and most are no longer progressing toward English proficiency and are struggling academically, accumulating major academic gaps in their elementary school and/or middle school years (Menken & Kley, 2010; Olson, 2010). Each secondary ELL group has its particular challenges but arguably none greater than long-term ELLs.

Long-term ELLs are unique in that they are often familiar with U.S. society, are able to blend into regular culture, and are fluent in conversational English. As a result, their language needs go unnoticed and their poor academic performance is blamed on a lack of effort and motivation (Jacobs, 2008). Long-term ELLs also are frequently the only English speakers in their families and, consequently, have few opportunities to practice English at home and often take on adult roles earlier than their non-ELL peers (Carhill, et al., 2008; Jacobs, 2008). Many have developed habits of non-engagement, passivity and invisibility in school. Most long-term ELLs want to go to college, yet are unaware that their academic program may not be preparing them for that goal (Olson, 2010).

Because their overall academic performance is typically low, long-term ELLs are often forced to repeat grades, are at higher risk for dropping

out, and are often encouraged to pursue a GED instead of a traditional diploma (Advocates for the Children of New York, Inc., 2002; Menken, et al., 2007). Moreover, long-term ELLs are often identified as learning disabled and placed in remedial classes (Kim & García, 2014). Despite their poor academic performance, some recent research suggests that many long-term ELLs are highly motivated and seek out experiences that will improve their English proficiency yet are not provided with many opportunities to do so (Kim & García, 2014).

**Reclassified ELLs** are those students who have gained proficiency in English and meet a set of reclassification criteria set forth to no longer be labeled ELL and typically are placed in regular classrooms. Although reclassification criteria differ by state and districts, most use a combination of the following: an assessment of English language proficiency, teacher evaluations, parent opinion and consultation, and a comparison of performance on basic academic skills. Reclassified ELLs tend to be disproportionately female, do not qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and have home languages other than Spanish.

Reclassified ELLs are included as a type of secondary ELLs even though they are not technically labeled ELLs, because many still have language needs that need to be addressed due to premature reclassification (Abedi, 2008). However, Robinson (2011) and Abedi (2008) found that many reclassified ELLs are entering regular classes too soon. As a result, they often lack the academic vocabulary necessary to be successful and fall behind. Further, reclassified ELL students often enter classes that provide little or no scaffolding to accommodate their language needs, are no longer taught by ELL certified teachers and enter classes with different student compositions making the transition even more difficult (Abedi, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Rubenstein-Avila, 2013).

Reclassified ELLs vary with regard to their academic performance. In comparison to their long-term ELL counterparts, reclassified ELLs tend to be high-performing students and often take more diverse courses while receiving language services (Robinson, 2011; Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). These findings were similar to a 2002 study by Advocates for Children of New York that found that reclassified ELL students had lower dropout rates

and higher graduation rates than their long-term ELL peers. Zarate & Pineda (2014) report that students who were classified as ELL in elementary school and were reclassified prior to sixth grade had a far greater chance of graduating from high school than those who were never reclassified, initially deemed English proficient, or were not tested for English proficiency. In another study, Thomas & Collier (2002) found that reclassified ELLs who attended segregated schools and were placed in remedial programs maintained or widened the achievement gap. On the other hand, reclassified ELL students enrolled in maintenance bilingual programs had higher scores on standardized tests than reclassified ELL students who received instruction in English-only classrooms.

### Understanding ELL funding in Texas

Texas defines an ELL student as “a student whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English.” Texas provides four different types of bilingual (BLE) models, mostly in primary grades, and two different

Adjustments for School District Characteristics		
Classification	Description	Weight
Bilingual/ESL	Based on the number of students that participate in programs, additional funds are used for salaries and instructional resources.	0.10
Career and Technology Education	Based on the amount of time students spend in eligible career technology courses, additional funds pay for salaries and instructional resources.	1.35
Compensatory Education	Based on the number of students that are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, additional funding assists students performing below grade level.	0.20
	An additional component is utilized for program serving pregnant students.	2.41
Cost of Education Index	Accounts for differences in resource costs that are beyond the control of the district. The five components are the: (a) average beginning salary of teachers in contiguous school districts, (b) percent of economically disadvantaged students, (c) district size, (d) location in a rural county with less than 40,000 people, and (e) district classified as “independent town” or “rural.”	1.02 to 1.20
Gifted/Talented	Based on individual district requirements, additional funding pays for salaries and instructional resources. State funding is capped at 5% of each district’s ADA.	0.12
Small and Mid-Sized Districts	Designed to supplement higher fixed costs of operating districts in less populated areas. “Small” is less than 1,600 ADA. “Mid-sized” is between 1,601 to 5,000 ADA.	1.0 to 1.61
Sparsity Adjustment	Based on the number of students in district, range of grade levels available, and distance to a district with a high school if necessary.	Enrollment increased by 60, 75 or 130
Special Education	There are 12 special education instructional arrangements with varying weights based on duration of the daily service and location of the instruction.	1.7 to 5.0



types of special language (SL) programs, mostly in secondary grades. In spring 2012 there were a total of 838,494 ELLs of which 477,297 were enrolled in a BLE program and 313,691 were enrolled in a SL program. There were 47,506 ELLs not enrolled in any of these programs.

The Texas Foundation School Program (FSP) Tier I funding consists of a basic allotment per pupil and a series of weighted adjustments that account for differences in student and district characteristics.

Texas HB 72, in 1984, developed a weighted revenue component as part of the FSP for students needing bilingual and special language instructional programs. The final weighting of the bilingual component of the FSP (an additional revenue amount of 0.10) was lower than estimates generated in then-current research (Cárdenas, 1997). The bilingual weighting factor of 10 percent above the base level funding – unchanged since its inception – is based largely on legislative, political, and fiscal considerations of the time not on empirical evidence of student learning needs (Baker & Duncombe, 2004). It is important to note that Texas policy funds “bilingual” students served in bilingual/SLP, but not necessarily all ELL students and a school with 20 or more ELL students in a single grade level is mandated to provide these programs. Nor does the FSP distinguish between a secondary and primary grade ELL.

## Methods

This study asked two primary questions:

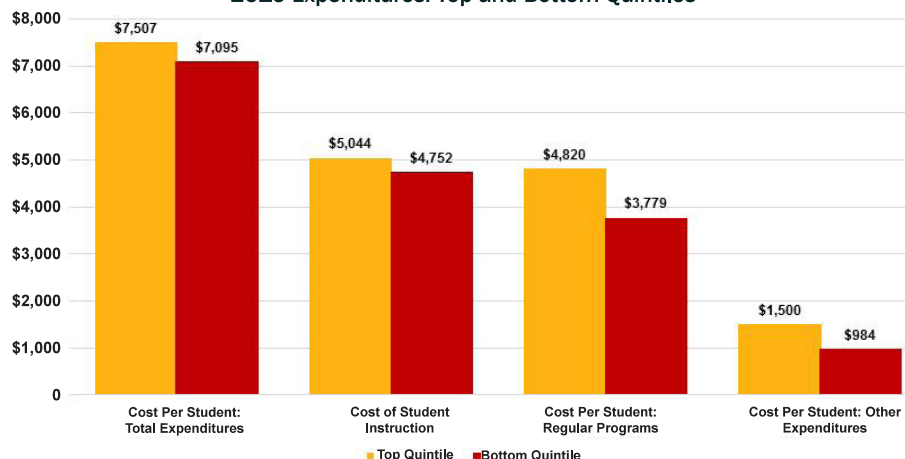
1. How many secondary schools met Texas’ academic benchmark with ELLs?
2. Are there any statistical differences in school characteristics and expenditures per pupil between the highest and lowest performing secondary schools with ELLs in Texas?

Data were gathered from the Public Education Information Management

System (PEIMS) and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The unit of analysis is individual school level data. General funds (those generated at the local

and state level), not total funds expenditure (which includes federal funds), data were used in the analysis in an effort to focus on the funding controlled by Texas’ FSP. Data were collected for three years from 2010

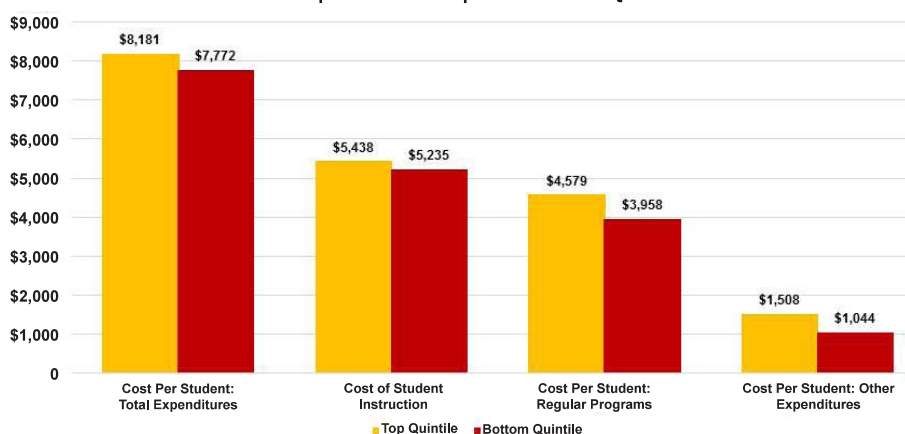
2010 Expenditures: Top and Bottom Quintiles



2010 F Test for Mean Differences Comparing Expenditures of Top and Bottom Quintiles

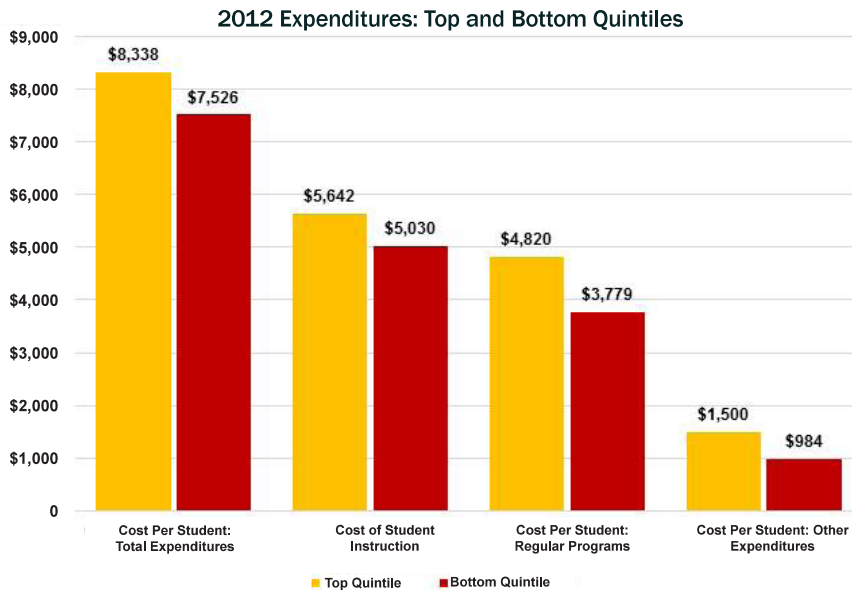
Variable	F Value	Degrees of Freedom	P Value
Cost Per Student Total Expenditure	1.348	1 , 216	.247
Cost Per Student Total Other Expenditure	11.196	1 , 216	.001
Cost of Student Instruction	2.209	1 , 216	.139
Cost Per Student of Regular Programs	6.88	1 , 216	.009
Cost Per Student With Disabilities	29.958	1 , 205	.000

2011 Expenditures: Top and Bottom Quintiles



2011 F Test for Mean Differences Comparing Expenditures of Top and Bottom Quintiles

Variable	F Value	Degrees of Freedom	P Value
Cost Per Student Total Expenditure	.770	1 , 126	.001
Cost Per Student Total Other Expenditure	13.937	1 , 216	.000
Cost of Student Instruction	.451	1 , 216	.502
Cost Per Student of Regular Programs	9.941	1 , 215	.002
Cost Per Student With Disabilities	.209	1 , 205	.648



2012 F Test for Mean Differences Comparing Expenditures of Top and Bottom Quintiles			
Variable	F Value	Degrees of Freedom	P Value
Cost Per Student Total Expenditure	3.308	1, 242	.070
Cost Per Student Total Other Expenditure	21.968	1, 242	.000
Cost of Student Instruction	3.360	1, 242	.068
Cost Per Student of Regular Programs	17.646	1, 242	.000
Cost Per Student With Disabilities	1.574	1, 226	.211

through 2012. These were the most recent years available for both AEIS and PEIMS data to be merged into one dataset.

All secondary schools in Texas were stratified by quintiles based on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAKS), all tests, passing rates for ELLs. A one-way ANOVA comparison of means analysis was conducted to examine the difference in school characteristics and expenditure levels between the highest and lowest ELL achievement quintile schools.

### Study Results

#### How many secondary schools met Texas' academic benchmark with ELLs?

There are very few schools that met Texas' academic benchmark of 75 percent or more ELLs passing TAKS. No more than 17 schools in any given year met Texas' academic benchmark with their ELL students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS (all tests). Another significant

result is that over 60 percent of the schools with 10<sup>th</sup> grade students had masked or missing ELL data. This suggests that there are many schools with fewer than five ELL students tested.

For 2010: 1,127 out of 1,698 or 66.4 percent of these schools have masked or missing 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELL TAKS (all tests) data. Only 15 out of 571, or 2.6 percent, schools have 75 percent or more ELLs meeting or exceeding TAKS benchmarks in all academic areas (math, ELA, science, social studies)

For 2011: 1,105 out of 1,741 or 63.3 percent of these schools have masked or missing 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELL TAKS (all tests) data. Only 12 out of 636 or 1.9 percent secondary schools reported having 75 percent or more ELLs meeting or exceeding TAKS benchmarks in all academic areas (math, ELA, science, social

studies)

For 2012: 1,088 out of 1745 or 62 percent of these schools have masked or missing 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELL TAKS (all tests) data. Only 17 out of 657 or 2.6 percent secondary schools reported having 75 percent or more ELLs meeting or exceeding TAKS benchmarks in all academic areas (math, ELA, science, social studies)

It is important to note that only two schools in Texas met ELL academic benchmarks across all three years.

#### Are there any statistical differences in school expenditures per pupil between the highest and lowest performing secondary schools with ELLs in Texas?

In 2010, the highest ELL performing schools spent more money per pupil in each major expenditure category than the lowest ELL performing schools. The regular program expenditure per pupil and other expenditures per pupil were found to be statistically significantly different. In particular, the largest difference between the highest and lowest ELL performing schools of approximately \$1,000 per pupil was found in regular program expenditures per pupil.

In 2011, the highest ELL performing schools again spent more money per pupil in each major expenditure category than the lowest ELL performing schools. This year, the total expenditures per pupil, regular program expenditure per pupil and other expenditures per pupil were found to be statistically significantly different. Again, the largest difference between the highest and lowest ELL performing schools of approximately \$600 per pupil was found in regular program expenditures per pupil.

In 2012, the highest ELL performing schools again spent more money per pupil in each major expenditure category than the lowest ELL performing schools with the gap widening. This year, the total expenditures per pupil, regular

program expenditure per pupil and other expenditures per pupil were found to be statistically significantly different. Furthermore, the fourth expenditure category, student instruction, was approaching significance for the first time. Again, the largest difference between the highest and lowest ELL performing schools of approximately \$1,000 per pupil was found in regular program expenditures per pupil.

### **What are some characteristics of effective secondary schools with ELLs?**

Although the study shows that higher ELL performing schools invest more money per pupil than lower ELL performing schools, it is still incredibly important to examine how schools should use their resources to improve instruction for ELLs. It is not only money in isolation but how those funds are used that matter. The finding of two comprehensive studies (AIR, 2009; Rivera, et al., 2008) provides some general characteristics of effective secondary schools with ELLs.

- Implementing a well-defined, rigorously structured plan of instruction for ELLs;
- Educators need to differentiate the content, instructional techniques and strategies, the student production, and the educational environment;
- A comprehensive, coherent assessment program that spans the school, district, and state levels needs to be developed and implemented that leads to a clear understanding of ELLs' language, literacy, and content-area competencies and instructional needs;
- Ensuring that teachers are skilled in addressing the needs of ELLs;
- Regularly adjusting instructional planning based on student performance.

However, there are different types of ELLs. Thus additional research provides us more specific recommendations of what seems to

work with the three primary types of secondary ELLs.

### **What seems to work with recent arrivals?**

- The higher the parents educational level and the stronger their primary language skills the better they tend to do academically (Conger, et al, 2011).
- Some ESL or bilingual education upon arrival consistently reported higher grades than students who had received no second language instruction (Padilla & Gonzalez, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002)
- Placing secondary newcomer ELLs in the lower of the two age-appropriate grades (Conger, 2013)
- Newcomer programs (Short & Boyson, 2012)
- ELL students who interacted with their English-speaking peers had more access to vital cultural and linguistic knowledge (Daoud, 2003)
- Native courses/AP courses

### **What seems to work with long-term ELLs?**

Although the research on what are effective practices are much more limited with long-term ELLs, a comprehensive study (Olson, 2010) found that districts piloting the approaches below, reported more student engagement, fewer course failures, increased college-going rates, and improved high school exit exam passage rates.

- Developing a specialized English language development course;
- Cluster placement in rigorous grade-level content classes mixed with English proficient students and taught with differentiated SDAIE strategies;
- Explicit language and literacy development across the curriculum;
- Native speakers classes in which the students have the opportunity to develop language and literacy

skills in their native language like Spanish for Spanish Speakers (through Advanced Placement levels);

- Systems for monitoring progress and triggering support; and
- A focus on study skills.

### **What seems to work with reclassified ELLs?**

- Proper and accurate reclassification (Abedi, 2008; Robinson, 2011)
- Support and monitoring after reclassification (Kim & García, 2014)
- Access to rigorous curriculum (Forrest, 2006; Soto, 2011)

### **What does the current literature tell us about the cost to adequately fund ELLs students?**

Costing out studies, in general, seek to determine what resources are needed to provide an adequate education to public school students, how much an adequate education should cost to meet a determined benchmark, and how revenue should be generated. The primary method for determining the costs associated with educating K-12 children, including ELLs, has been through the use of costing out studies. Currently, the four prominent cost study methodologies are professional judgment panel (PJP), successful school model (SSM), evidenced-based (EB) approach, and cost function analysis (CFA).

Of the 70 empirical studies reviewed in Jimenez-Castellanos & Topper (2012), each of the costing out methodologies accounted for ELLs in some way, however, the level of consideration and detail varied substantially across methodologies and only four studies specifically focused on ELLs.

Jimenez-Castellanos & Topper (2012) found that states are not allocating sufficient funds to adequately educate the general K-12 population including ELLs. Below is a representative sample of the recommended weights for ELLs.



Authors	ELL Adjustment/Weight
Augenblick & Myers (2001, 2002, 2003)	0.14 to 1.25
Augenblick, Paliach & Associates (2003a, b)	0.60 to 2.04
Duncombe & Yinger (2005)	1.01 to 1.4
META Inc. (2008)	0.46 to 0.64
Kansas Legislative Division (2006)	0.10
Oregon Quality Education Commission (2000)	0.50
Picus & Associates (2006)	1 FTE per 100 ELLs
Standard & Poor (2004)	1.2

Lastly, Jimenez-Castellanos & Topper (2012) found that there is no coherent effort to distinguish between different types of ELLs the current costing out methods need to be adapted to better account for the diverse and complex needs of the ELL student population.

## Conclusions

There is a myth that ELLs are a monolithic and homogenous group of students. However, ELLs are as diverse as any other group of students including at the secondary level. They come from different socio-economic backgrounds with parents with varying educational levels, speak different languages with a varying degree of literacy both in their primary language and English. At the same time we do know a couple of important facts about ELLs in Texas that are worth emphasizing: approximately 90 percent of ELLs are Spanish speaking and the majority of ELLs are U.S. native born including approximately 60 percent at the secondary level.

First, this study suggests that the Texas' school funding system and instructional program are inadequate to support and sustain secondary ELLs meeting Texas' academic benchmarks. For instance, less than 20 schools across the state met ELL academic benchmarks in any given year from 2010 through 2012, and only two schools met ELL academic benchmarks across all three years.

Second, the study suggests that investing more money into schools

seems to have a positive impact on ELL student academic outcomes. For instance, the study found that the highest ELL performing schools expended significantly more funding than the lowest ELL performing schools. In particular, they expended approximately \$1,000 per pupil in regular programs. This disparity translates into \$1 million for a high school with 1,000 students in Texas.

## Recommendations

In general, it is important for ELLs to have a well-funded regular program and access to appropriately rigorous coursework while being held to high expectations to meet high academic benchmarks set by the State of Texas. Based on this study and the current literature on the topic, there are a few policy recommendations that Texas state policy makers should consider.

- Texas should increase base level funding to support a high quality regular program for all students including ELLs. The study showed that more investment produced better academic outcomes for ELLs. The exact amount of base funding should be driven by need and cost of effective research based programs for ELLs.
- Texas' bilingual weight (0.10), developed in 1984, should be revisited to better reflect the investment needed to adequately educate ELLs in Texas' public schools. It is recommended that Texas' bilingual weight be

increased to 0.50 (minimum) based on the most recent empirical research. This recommendation is conservative because it acknowledges that the current cost study literature does not capture the complex needs of ELLs.

- Increase ELL access to rigorous coursework, such as advanced placement and dual credit courses and international baccalaureate programs. Albeit counter intuitive at first due to ELLs learning English as a second language, the more challenging the curriculum, with proper modifications, the better ELLs do academically. This also reinforces the importance of high expectations for all students including ELLs.
- Adopt and implement research-based programs and practices tailored toward different types of secondary ELLs. Far too often policies and programs are adopted that are not supported by research, or a one-size-fits-all model is adopted without consideration of different needs ELL students.

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## Research and Symposium Recommendations

*The following recommendations were derived from the robust discussion among the participants at the IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow Symposium. The recommendations are divided into relevant categories and include suggestions for the many important people who directly contribute to education, from policymakers to parents. Aside from the suggestions below, it is important to note that the participants all stressed the need to act now.*

### Governance and Leadership

- **Make education of ELLs a priority:** Educational success of ELLs must be a priority for state leaders and local school boards and should be reflected in school policy and campus improvement plans.
- **Require administrator support and leadership:** Administrators must establish the education and success of ELLs as a high priority that includes consistent program monitoring, evaluation and appropriate modifications in services to ensure student success.

### Funding

- **Provide equitable funding:** Quality education of ELLs requires equitable funding based on actual costs and provided through a weighted student approach. The ELL weight needs to be increased from the current 0.10 to a

minimum of 0.50 as indicated by the research literature.

- **Target funding for specific services to ELLs:** Provisions must be in place to ensure that funding provided for ELL education is actually used for the delivery of services for those students.
- **Connect funding policy and the resources students actually need to succeed:** More research may be needed on how much money is required for specific purposes to provide quality education for ELLs.
- **Allocate funding appropriately for a high-quality curriculum,** which is necessary for ELL students as for all students: Invest funds in research-based, effective programs and materials specifically targeted to address the needs of ELL students.

### Student Identification and Support

- **Implement reliable and research-based student identification and placement procedures:** Secondary ELLs must be identified using psychometrically-sound English language proficiency assessments and appropriate achievement assessment measures administered by qualified staff.
- **Create and implement networks of student support:** Networks of support, such as student learning communities, mentors and coaches, must be available to ELLs.



- **Ensure non-segregated settings:** Schools must ensure that ELL students are not segregated in campus and school district activities.
- **Ensure equal participation in extracurricular activities:** ELL student participation in extracurricular activities must be comparable with non-ELL students.
- **Ensure ELL students are not under identified as ELL:** Dismantle the ideological and monetary restrictions that lead to under-identification students as ELL.
- **Require transition plans for students,** especially students who are new to the country. Include assessments about their skills and unique educational needs.
- **Ensure students are properly supported** by teachers and personnel at their destination school when students transition to the secondary school level.
- **Establish links between Newcomer Centers** and the local school districts and campuses where newcomers will eventually be transferring. These partnerships should be both supportive to the student and informative for teachers in gaining a better understanding of their student's needs as they transition.

### State Oversight and Compliance

- **Design and implement a robust monitoring and compliance system:** State education agencies' oversight and compliance responsibilities must address a monitoring system that reviews: (1) adherence to program design and quality program standards; (2) fidelity of implementation; and (3) high comparable academic achievement standards for ELL students that ensures state and local accountability for the educational success of all ELL students.
- **Legislate appropriate policies and funding:** State legislators must ensure that appropriate policies and funding that support research-based and effective instruction of ELL students are in place and include school accountability measures.
- **Establish appropriate incentives** for improved performance and innovation rather than keeping educators and administrators in a "compliance" mindset. Support implementation of programs that are designed to ensure all ELLs are college ready, rather than programs that provide minimal transitional support.
- **Generate responsive and practical rules and regulations:** The commissioner of education must ensure that state rules and regulations reflect the spirit and intent of the law as it relates to high comparable achievement for all ELL students.
- **Monitor progress:** Ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor ELL academic progress.
- **Provide disaggregated data:** Ensure that assessment mechanisms provide disaggregated grade-level data on achievement of ELL students.

### Curriculum Quality

- **Provide qualified staff:** All ELL students must be taught by teachers who are appropriately certified in the content area and ESL.
- **Provide continuous professional development:** In addition to ESL teachers of record, all staff and leadership serving ELL students must be provided continuous professional development on effective, research-based practices for serving ELLs.
- **Design and implement a rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares ELLs for college:** A curriculum must be designed specifically for ELLs and must meet the rigor and relevance

requirements of the state's standard curriculum.

- **Implement research-based instructional strategies:** Instruction of ELLs must integrate the development of content mastery with the simultaneous development of English language skills.
- **Provide appropriate supplemental instructional services:** Appropriate supplemental instructional programs and activities must be accessible to ELLs who are not reaching state, district and campus achievement goals.
- **Ensure academic success before exiting:** ELL students must be required to meet comparable high achievement in the content areas, including English language proficiency, as measured through state-required tests.

### Teacher Certification and Education

- **Recruit more teachers who are trained** and appropriately certified to serve the growing number of ELLs. At the university level, prepare more teachers to effectively serve ELL students.
- **Establish more and improved professional development** to support current teachers so that they can take their experience and build knowledge to enhance their current work. This is especially important to reinforce content-area skills.
- **Require bilingual/ESL teachers teaching secondary level students to have ESL certification.** In cases where the school has exhausted efforts to hire ESL certified teachers without success, non-certified teachers of ELL students may be allowed to enter the teaching profession with the requirement that they obtain their ESL certification within the school year. The school district should assist teachers with getting training and support needed to acquire the ESL certification.



- **Provide effective strategies for teaching in languages in addition to Spanish.** ELLs in Texas may primarily be Spanish-speaking, but there are many children who speak other languages, and they are entitled to support.
- **Move toward requiring all education students in our colleges and universities to learn strategies for supporting ELL students** in obtaining their degree, not just future ESL teachers. Other states, including Minnesota have already done so.
- **Create a system of information on ELL students who are transitioning** into the classroom to help their new teachers know students' proficiency level and education needs to inform instruction.
- **Expand efforts to keep bilingual/ESL certified teachers in the field.** Retention would be greatly helped by assuring that teachers and teachers-in-training have high expectations for ELL students; are prepared, competent and well-paid; and have the support of other educators, parents and the community.
- **Hold the state, school districts and campuses accountable:** Schools must be held accountable for the high comparable academic achievement of all ELL students and must inform parents and community of progress in meeting district and campus goals.

### **Parent and Community Engagement**

- **Engage parents as equal partners:** Schools must engage parents of ELL students as equal partners in the design and implementation of school-based solutions.
- **Involve community:** Schools must ensure that communities participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational services provided for ELLs.
- **Foster partnerships between school districts and universities** so that the universities know the needs of the schools where their future teachers are likely to be employed.

### **Teacher Compensation and Retention**

- **Ensure that salaries for teachers of ELL students so are competitive** with other teachers and that salaries are not limited by district wealth.
- **Provide administrator support of bilingual education and ESL teachers and ELLs.** Examples include mentoring, planning time, recognition of contributions to school success, professional learning communities, and focused professional development and materials supporting best practices.

### **Monitoring and Accountability**

- **Monitor ESL programs sufficiently.** There are too many schools that are not required to report data on ELLs.
- **Monitor for sustainability of academic success:** Academic progress of former ELL students must be monitored for two years after exiting and appropriate measures taken, such as re-enrolling or re-adjusting curriculum for students who do not maintain acceptable academic performance levels.



# **Appendices**

# U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Release Joint Guidance to Ensure English Learner Students Have Equal Access to High-Quality Education

[January 2015] The U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Justice (DOJ) today released joint guidance reminding states, school districts and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential.

“Four decades ago, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Lau vs. Nichols* that all students deserve equal access to a high-quality education regardless of their language background or how well they know English,” said ED Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon. “Today’s guidance not only reminds us of the court’s ruling, but also provides useful information for schools as they work to ensure equity for students and families with limited English proficiency.”

“The diversity of this nation is one of its greatest attributes,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta for the Civil Rights Division at DOJ. “Ensuring English learner students are supported in their education supports all of us. Today’s guidance — 40 years after passage of the landmark *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* — will help schools meet their legal obligations to ensure all students can succeed.”

In addition to the guidance, the Departments also released additional tools and resources to help schools

**See the guidance letter online with links to the factsheets, toolkits and resources in multiple languages.**

<http://budurl.com/USDOEell2015>

in serving English learner students and parents with limited English proficiency:

- A fact sheet in English and in other languages about schools’ obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students can participate meaningfully and equally in school.
- A fact sheet in English and in other languages about schools’ obligations under federal law to communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand.
- A toolkit to help school districts identify English learner students, prepared by the Education Department’s Office of English Language Acquisition. This is the first chapter in a series of chapters to help state education agencies and school districts meet their obligations to English learner students.

This is the first time that a single piece of guidance has addressed the array

of federal laws that govern schools’ obligations to English learners. The guidance recognizes the recent milestone 40th anniversaries of *Lau vs. Nichols* and the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974 (EEOA), as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Civil Rights Act*. The EEOA, similar to *Lau*, requires public schools to take appropriate action to help English learner students overcome language barriers and ensure their ability to participate equally in school.

The guidance explains schools’ obligations to:

- identify English learner students in a timely, valid and reliable manner;
- offer all English learner students an educationally sound language assistance program;
- provide qualified staff and sufficient resources for instructing English learner students;
- ensure English learner students have equitable access to school programs and activities;
- avoid unnecessary segregation of English learner students from other students;
- monitor students’ progress in learning English and doing grade-level classwork;
- remedy any academic deficits English learner students incurred while in a language assistance program;



- move students out of language assistance programs when they are proficient in English and monitor those students to ensure they were not prematurely removed;
- evaluate the effectiveness of English learner programs; and
- provide limited English proficient parents with information about school programs, services, and activities in a language they understand.

Almost 5 million students in the United States are English learners—about 9 percent of all public school students. From 2002 to 2011, the percentage of English learners in public schools increased in 40 states and the District of Columbia, and currently three out of every four public schools enroll English learner students.

The mission of the ED Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is to ensure equal access to education and promote educational excellence throughout the nation through the vigorous enforcement of civil rights. OCR is responsible for enforcing federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination by educational institutions on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex and age, as well as the *Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2001*. Additional information about OCR is available [here](#) and additional resources,

including previous guidance released on this topic, is available here: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html>.

The enforcement of the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* and Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* to ensure that English learner students and limited English proficient parents receive the services to which they are entitled is a top priority of the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. Additional information on DOJ's efforts to provide equal educational opportunities to all students is available here: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/>.

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# IDRA Resources

## Science Instructional Strategies for English Learners ~ A Guide for Elementary and Secondary Grades

Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D., Veronica Betancourt, M.A., Kristin Grayson, M.Ed., and Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D.



This guide presents seven research-based strategies for instruction of English learners in science. It is divided into four sections – teaching learning premises (theoretical underpinnings for each strategy); research support; essential

teacher competencies (pedagogical skills necessary for effective implementation of each strategy); steps for strategy implementation – along with a matrix of techniques for implementation.

(No ISBN; 20 Pages; English; 2012) \$20.00

## Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English – A Guide

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., Albert Cortez, Ph.D., & Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.



Thirty years of research have proven that when implemented well, bilingual education is the best way to learn English. Research by IDRA has identified the 25

common characteristics of successful schools that contribute to high academic performance of students learning English.

(ISBN: 1-878550-69-1; 64 Pages; 2002) \$15.00

## Semillitas de Aprendizaje Bilingual Early Childhood Supplemental Curriculum

Semillitas de Aprendizaje is a unique bilingual (Spanish/English) set of early childhood materials by IDRA based on the art of storytelling. Materials include:

- **10 Storybooks** – beautifully-illustrated culturally-relevant bilingual stories with rich vocabulary
- **10 Big Books** – abridged version of the bilingual storybooks designed for classroom interaction
- **20 Cartitas** (10 English, 10 Spanish) – with family activities for teachers to send home for parents related to the 10 stories
- **15 Math Books** – bilingual for classroom and home use focusing on numeracy and social-emotional development
- **Teacher Guide** – 10 units in 196 pages to support early childhood bilingual literacy development
- **Storytelling DVD** – stories are brought to life through engaging storytelling in Spanish and story-reading in English



## Texas School Finance Reform: An IDRA Perspective

José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.



A master story-teller, Dr. José A. Cárdenas offers an insider's view of the 28-year history of school finance in Texas. More than a history, this book provides a blueprint for persons interested in bringing about future reform in schools and other social institutions. (ISBN: 1-878550-63-2; 387 pages; 1997) \$30.00

## What Every Teacher Should Know About Migrant Students (Book & CD)



This interactive CD and guide for teachers, administrators and counselors of migrant students provides insights about migrant students in their classroom and best practices within migrant education programs.

(No ISBN; CD and brochure, 16 Pages; 2006) \$25.00

## Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework

Edited by María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Christie L. Goodman, APR



This book presents IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework™ and shows how communities and schools can work together to strengthen their capacity to be successful with all of their students. The Quality Schools Action Framework is based on experience and empirical evidence that emerges from existing theories of change.

It gives a model for assessing a school's conditions and outcomes, for identifying leverage points for improvement, and for informing action.

(ISBN 978-1-935737-35-3; 272 Pages; Paperback; 2010) \$15.00

Customized professional development on implementing these strategies in the classroom also is available.

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